

Goddard Space Flight Center

Diversity Dialogues

Project Debrief

O.D. Systems

July 2003

Diversity Dialogues

Phase D of Diversity Dialogues (DD) was conducted from January-July 2003.

The purpose, process, and approach remained unchanged from previous phases.

Dialogue Participant

“This has been an excellent process. I got to meet people, learn more about the culture here—how different organizations operate. I keep an open mind. I’m learning a different way of looking at the world.”

Major Themes

- ❖ Employees increasingly value the DD process
- ❖ Discussion of diversity is challenging, takes time, and involves risk
- ❖ Attendance challenge and competing commitments

Major Themes

- ❖ Employees question whether Goddard's values are being “lived” (e.g., balance)
- ❖ Employees do not have a common understanding of what each of the values really means (e.g., dedication)

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- ❖ Strong differentiation between occupations
- ❖ The dialogue process is a challenge for task-oriented employees
- ❖ DD is a catalyst for discussing diversity issues

Intact Work Groups

- ❖ Work group members feel an increased risk in participating in DD
- ❖ Attendance and active participation by the work group's manager is critical
- ❖ DD is not an appropriate forum for managing internal work group problems
- ❖ Assess representation of work group

Wallops-Greenbelt Group

- ❖ Great opportunity to network and share information
- ❖ Discussion of culture differences between the two locations
- ❖ Challenge to keep attendance up given the commute

Internal Facilitators

- ❖ Developed competencies (e.g., training, observation, participation, coaching)
- ❖ Commitment and support for DD (i.e., time, desire, acknowledgement)
- ❖ Internalizing the DD process and taking ownership
- ❖ O.D. Systems provides coaching

Outcomes

- ❖ DD is a forum for discussing the impact of change on mission accomplishment
- ❖ High value placed on getting to know each other better and understand the GSFC culture
- ❖ Created a safe forum to help employees manage difficult situations (e.g., shuttle disaster, Iraq war)

Outcomes

- ❖ Increased networking and opportunities to share information
- ❖ Use of storytelling and personal disclosure to foster authenticity within the DD groups
- ❖ Employees valuing each other's diversity (e.g., disability)

Dynamic Process

- ❖ Updated participant materials
- ❖ Created flexible framework
- ❖ Use of explicit structure
- ❖ Use of “real-time” issues and events
- ❖ Wallops -Greenbelt DD group

Recommendations

- ❖ Conduct meeting with intact work group manager to determine if appropriate for DD
- ❖ Have senior management “drop in” on DD sessions to demonstrate commitment
- ❖ Link diversity program initiatives and formal training to opportunity to participate in DD

Recommendations

- ❖ Modify framework and articles to more explicitly address culture differences between Wallops and Greenbelt
- ❖ Recognize and acknowledge the effort and commitment of the internal facilitators

Recommendations

- ❖ Continue to invite nominated DD members to a current DD session
- ❖ Continue to include management in the DD groups
- ❖ Maintain the momentum with future DD phases

Dialogue Participant

“Ultimately, when you move on, people will not talk about what you did as an engineer. It’s the relationships with people. It’s not what you take with you, it’s what you leave behind.”